



**Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia,  
Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia**

**“The Legacies of the Holocaust: Former Soviet Union”**

**Testimony of Mark B. Levin, Executive Director**

**NCSJ: Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia**

**Before the**

**United States Senate**

**Committee on Foreign Relations**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee to discuss the nature and remedies for popular hate movements in the successor states of the former Soviet Union. I am testifying on behalf of NCSJ, Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine the Baltic States & Eurasia, which I serve as Executive Director. NCSJ, a non-for-profit agency created in 1971, is the mandated central coordinating agency in the United States on behalf of the 1.5 million Jews in the successor states. Today, NCSJ continues its commitment to safeguard the religious and political freedoms of Jews living in the successor states, protect their right to emigrate without impediment, monitor and combat anti-Semitism, and ensure that Jews have full access to Jewish education, culture, and heritage. NCSJ comprises 46 national member agencies and over 300 local community councils and federations across the United States. The Russian Jewish Congress, an umbrella organization of Jewish communities and organizations in the Russian Federation, with which we and the organized American Jewish community work in close cooperation, has asked to be associated with today's testimony.

Those of us who struggled to free Soviet Jews during the last 30 years, whether in Congress or in citizen movements, would never have imagined last month's Russian Presidential election, which met international standards and reflected a vibrant and engaged polity. Last December's parliamentary elections were similarly unimaginable just ten years ago, in spite of the attempts to manipulate the outcome through the media. The other successor states exhibit an uneven range of democracy and civil society, from the unchained Baltic democracies of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the largely untrained autocracies of Central Asia. In most cases, however, the distance traveled is significant. We would never have imagined a present where American Jewish delegations and indigenous Jewish leadership routinely meet with political leaders of the Russian Federation and most other successor states, allowing us to convey our concerns and hopes directly to those in power.

At the same time, we would never have imagined a post-Soviet landscape littered with neo-Nazi and fascist-oriented extremists visibly trying to revive the same fundamental ideology against which the Russian people battled so fiercely just six decades ago. As with other European countries that have seen a resurgence in hate movements and anti-Semitic appeals, Russia has also experienced this ugly phenomenon along with other successor states, particularly those bordering Eastern Europe. This reality is at once frightening and challenging, frightening since the stakes are so high at this decisive moment in the future direction of these fragmented societies and challenging since Americans and like-minded survivors of Soviet totalitarianism can still have a tremendous impact on that future direction. To do so, America must act now to support targeted initiatives and remain committed to seeing through what will be a decades-long succession of progress and setback.

The Committee on Foreign Relations, the United States Senate and the U.S. Congress have all established a proud and indispensable track record of leadership in the spheres of international human rights, religious freedom, and minority protection. The Senate's ongoing engagement and creativity on the international issues being addressed in today's hearing has been indispensable over the past decades of Cold War and emerging democracy in Europe. Just last month, Mr. Chairman, 96 of your colleagues joined you and Senator Biden in urging Russia's new acting President Vladimir Putin to take strong measures against anti-Semitism, eliciting an almost immediate and unequivocal Russian response. This was an indispensable reinforcement of last

year's Smith-Biden letter to then-President Boris Yeltsin signed by a total 99 Senators, on the eve of his meeting with President Clinton in Cologne.

America's role in this respect is not significantly different from that envisioned by the aging Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in 1824, "I shall not die without a hope that light and liberty are on steady advance....And even should the cloud of barbarism and despotism again obscure the science and liberties of Europe, this country remains to preserve and restore light and liberty to them. In short, the flames kindled on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them."

The Soviet Jewry movement, from which my organization originated and in which hundreds of successive Members of the United States Congress actively participated, can claim an instrumental role in actualizing for the first time some of the fundamental principles enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Helsinki Final Act, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commission on International Religious Freedom and the reality that nearly all countries today must accept the validity of international standards even if they continue to violate them, all bear the mark of American pioneers who redefined the boundaries of conventional diplomacy and partisan politics.

I wish to dedicate my testimony today to the memory of one of those pioneers, who passed away last month. Morris Abram, among the American Jewish community's most distinguished leaders and a former Chairman of NCSJ, was a prominent lifelong advocate for civil rights at home and human rights worldwide. He served five U.S. Presidents and was no stranger to these halls. He served on the prosecution team at the war crimes tribunal in Nuremberg in the 1940s, helped galvanize support for the Soviet Jewry movement in the 1980s, and spent his last ten years addressing the court of international opinion within the United Nations system.

Responsible for the famous 1963 "one man, one vote" landmark Supreme Court ruling, Morris Abram maintained that appeals to racism and bigotry are effective only so long as society tolerates it. As America's opinion-leaders began making clear in the 1960s that racist rhetoric was unacceptable, mainstream politicians and others stopped using it. In much the same way, delivering a strong, public and consistent message to Russian society is the most obvious way for Russian leaders to impact the public attitudes that reward anti-Semitic and xenophobic appeals.

Morris Abram understood how to apply the lessons from our own national history to the world stage. As you yourself have powerfully suggested, Mr. Chairman, America's own spotty record on religious freedom does not disqualify us from admonishing the world, rather it obligates us to speak out and offer creative solutions to the community of nations.

The end of the Cold War has presented new challenges to all concerned with the future of European society. Reflecting on his own role in promoting democracy and civil society in the wake of communism, Vaclav Havel writes, "The time of hard, everyday work has come, a time in which conflicting interests have surfaced, a time for sobering up, a time when all of us – and especially those in politics – must make it very clear what we stand for."

Leaders by definition help shape and inform the views of their constituents when they wish. As the Anti-Defamation League's September 1999 survey of Russian societal attitudes reported, 44 percent of Russians hold strongly anti-Semitic views. (With the Chairman's consent, I would submit the ADL report for insertion into the record of this hearing.) Many of these 44 percent are probably drawing lessons from pre-Soviet and Soviet leadership, who used anti-Semitism as a unifying device. Many of these 44 percent would probably think differently if those in positions of leadership and respect spoke out more forcefully against the canards and venom which characterize too many political speeches by fringe and – increasingly – mainstream politicians. We see the 44 percent statistic as a challenge rather than a failure. The failure will come if leaders do not set the tone for appropriate and acceptable rhetoric. We may not penalize nations for the sentiment in their hearts, but we must hold leaders accountable for effecting progress in public discourse and behavior.

Elsewhere in the successor states, the region of greatest significance is to Russia's west: Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic states. Belarus and Ukraine face contemporary movements that are partly inspired and supplied by the infrastructure of hate groups in Russia. With over half a million Jews living in Russia and over 400,000 in Ukraine, these two countries represent the flash point of anti-Semitic extremism and carry the highest stakes should the campaign for tolerance and civil society falter. The three Baltic states, whose pre-Soviet democratic tradition sets them apart from the other successor states, are struggling with issues of historical and national identity, including the remnants of pro-Nazi World War II detachments.

## **RUSSIA**

The modern phenomenon of post-Soviet hate groups combines elements from the fascism of World War II and the nationalism that stretches back to czarist times. Speakers and participants in rallies and attacks frequently resort to Holocaust references and Nazi symbolism, including use of the swastika. This present-day phenomenon is troubling in itself as the groups continue to gain supporters and political power, and in the inconsistent condemnation by Russian leaders and officials.

Russia's 1997 Religion Law remains a source of difficulty for numerous religious denominations that are not considered "traditional" religions. Although the Religion Law recognizes Judaism as traditional, a number of Russian Jewish leaders as well as NCSJ have criticized this law out of a sense of historical memory and out of concern that the freedom of no religion can be guaranteed if that of any other religion is denied or abridged. The Religion Law could provide the legal basis for future restrictions on Jews and other religious communities currently assumed to be "traditional".

While the anti-Semitism that existed as official state policy during the Soviet era has not resurfaced, some prominent political figures, particularly those associated with the Communist Party and ultra-nationalist movements, have employed anti-Semitism to further their own political ambitions. Such anti-Semitism, espoused by political leaders in parliamentary hearings, on television, in newspapers and at mass rallies, threatens to create a hostile environment for the Russian Jewish community. While still falling short of state-sponsored anti-Semitism, sporadic

statements by government officials and increasingly extreme election-oriented attacks in the state-owned media compel constant reevaluation.

The fact that this practice of scapegoating Jews as the source of Russia's economic and social problems was less prominent than expected during Russia's recent election cycle is largely a reflection of Russia's focus on the ongoing campaign in Chechnya. The sustained assault on Chechnya has served to distract the attention of Russian hate-mongers, who have scrambled to fuel the xenophobia underlying much of the public support for military actions in the would-be breakaway republic. Whether the Chechen campaign succeeds or fails in Russian eyes, Russian Jews fully expect to be blamed for many of its human and financial costs. And once the Chechen people are no longer center-stage to Russian xenophobia, the venom of Russia's extremist minority threatens to focus again on Jews.

## **HATE MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA TODAY**

Written and verbal statements by General Albert Makashov, a leader in the Communist Party and deputy in the Duma until last December's parliamentary elections, include an October 1998 editorial in the Russian newspaper *Zavtra* in which he stated that a "Yid" (derogatory Russian term for Jew) is "a bloodsucker feeding on the misfortunes of other people. They drink the blood of the indigenous peoples of the state; they are destroying industry and agriculture." The Duma failed to approve a resolution of censure against General Makashov for his anti-Semitic remarks, when it had the opportunity in 1998 and 1999, and in particular for his comments calling for death to Jews. The Communist Party has also failed to condemn General Makashov or to discipline him.

The extremist and virulently anti-Semitic Russian National Unity (RNE) movement is a paramilitary group registered in more than two dozen Russian regions, including major population centers. It is thought to have 50,000-60,000 members, of whom 10 percent are actively involved. At the same time, the skinhead movement in Russia, which first appeared in the mid-1990s, had already claimed 10,000 members by 1997. In July 1998, the Russian government proposed a ban on Nazi symbols and literature, but the legislation is still awaiting approval from the Russian Parliament. Locally, however, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov prohibited RNE from holding its convention in Moscow in December 1998. Mayor Luzhkov also visited a Moscow synagogue in a show of solidarity after a bomb was found there.

Although Pamyat was the leading Russian extremist group a decade ago, its place has been taken by newer or reconstituted groups – especially RNE – whose leaders and activists demonstrate more sophisticated manipulation of the political process and therefore pose a greater threat to rule of law and protection of minorities. Attempts by the Russian government to take action against these groups have only recently begun to pay off, with news that 12 members of Russian National Unity were arrested on criminal charges. The following politicians have regularly engaged in and supported irresponsible and inflammatory rhetoric against Jews and other Russian minority groups:

General Albert Makashov, former Duma Member

Viktor Ilyukhin, Duma Member, heads security committee  
Gennady Zyuganov, Duma Member, heads Communist Party  
Vladimir Zhirinovsky, heads ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party  
Nikolai Kondratenko, Governor of Krasnodar, Russia  
Alexander Barkashov, heads Russian National Unity  
Igor Semyonov, prominent in Russian National Unity

Mr. Zhirinovsky is now Deputy Speaker for foreign affairs in the new Duma, also chairing the committee responsible for media affairs, and a political associate of Governor Kondratenko now chairs the Duma committee on foreign affairs. These developments bespeak the mainstreaming rather than the marginalizing of hate.

RNE publications and their competition, though properly characterized as extremist, have gained such wide distribution that they may no longer be considered fringe. The following publications have consistently disseminated an alarming degree of virulent anti-Semitic messages, exhorting their readers to anti-Semitic violence:

*Natsionalnaya Gazeta*

*Russkaya Gazeta*—frequently uses ‘kike,’ and other anti-Semitic words/phrases

*Russkaya Mysl* (weekly, Russian language) (Dec. '98: in special issue in the form of leaflets w/ wartime posters and the appeal: “Death to the Yiddish Occupants”)

*Russkaya Pravda*

*Zavtra*

*Pamyat*

*DUEL*, fascist publication circulated both in print and on the Internet, which chillingly evokes Nazi-era propaganda, flashing images of Jews as pigs to be slaughtered

The dissemination of anti-Semitic literature and the preaching of anti-Semitic and xenophobic messages by certain political leaders has contributed to numerous incidents of popular or “street” anti-Semitism in the past two years. Attacks or attempted attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions increased with alarming ferocity last summer, with the stabbing of a Moscow community leader inside the Moscow Choral Synagogue, bombs exploding adjacent to synagogues, and explosive packages found inside at least two Jewish institutions. To their credit, Moscow authorities ensured adequate police protection for the city’s synagogues during last autumn’s High Holy Day services and no serious incidents occurred, but a continuous security presence either in Moscow or elsewhere in the Russian Federation is still lacking.

RNE held a demonstration in Moscow on January 31, 1999. That same weekend, youths interrupted the convention of the liberal Democratic Choice of Russia Party, making Nazi salutes and praising Stalin. In early 1999, the town of Borovichi experienced an upsurge of anti-Semitism in the form of posters and caricatures, Jewish activists and their families were threatened with violence, and fire was set to a new Jewish community facility provided by the town.

On March 7, 1999, a synagogue in Novosibirsk was desecrated. On May 1, two identical bombs exploded near Moscow's major synagogues; RNE was the prime suspect in the investigation. On May 2 and 3, the only synagogue in Jewish Autonomous Oblast in Siberia was attacked; windows were broken and swastikas were formed out of stones in the yard. On May 18, a disconnected though powerful bomb was found inside the Shalom Jewish Theater in Moscow.

On July 13, a neo-Nazi brutally stabbed a Jewish community leader inside the Moscow Choral Synagogue, and on July 25 a powerful bomb was discovered inside another Moscow synagogue, shortly before a religious celebration. Bombs also exploded adjacent to each of two Moscow synagogues during the same period. Moscow Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt told us at the time, "The situation is the worst it has been since I am here – it has never been worse." Rabbi Goldschmidt and his family have lived in Moscow for over ten years.

The existence of formal hate groups is now complemented by more mainstream attacks in the mass media. Carefully timed media attacks, based on the assumption that Jewish identity can disqualify candidates in the eyes of voters, have sought to tar political contenders with Jewish connections and even Jewish heritage. Two recent national broadcasts over O.R.T., a television network in which the Russian government has controlling interest, have been of special concern. In November 1999, days before Russia's parliamentary election, the leading news magazine "Vremya" aired a report that accused the Russian Jewish community in general, and the Russian Jewish Congress in particular, of being a "fifth column" for the West. Three days before Russia's March 26 Presidential election, O.R.T. capped a series of attacks on reformist candidate Grigory Yavlinsky by tying his support to gays, Jews, and Israelis. During the report, the images displayed included a scene of Jews in Hasidic garb.

The series of media attacks was understood by observers and political analysts as an attempt to keep Yavlinsky from draining votes from Mr. Putin. To the best knowledge of NCSJ, the Russian government has yet to condemn or repudiate either of these reports that were watched by millions of Russians, which is particularly unfortunate since audiences are uniquely focused during election campaigns – a fact the hate-mongers seem to fully appreciate.

A leaflet disseminated across Russia in December 1999 used a photograph of Russian Jewish Congress leader Vladimir Goussinsky standing with Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, both men wearing yarmulkes, under the heading, "A Puzzle for Children: Which of these two is Jewish?" The tag line read: "According to some information, the real name of Luzhkov is Katz. His name Luzhkov he took from his first wife." The leaflet was distributed just before Russians would vote in parliamentary elections, and Luzhkov's party was a leading contender for seats in the Duma. I would ask to submit the leaflet with English translation into the record of this hearing.

Given the current environment, has it become politically convenient to resort to ethnic and religious stereotypes, and politically inconvenient to denounce the propagandists?

Whatever these troubled economic and political times portend for Russia, former President Boris Yeltsin's administration did make various efforts to work against the nationalist and extremist forces in Russia. In an historic address to the nation on the occasion of the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nazi Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1998, President Yeltsin warned for the first time of

an increasing threat to Russia by the active neo-Nazi movement. In addition, he and other senior members of his government condemned a number of manifestations of anti-Semitism in Russia and pledged to take action. Those first steps were noteworthy and encouraging, but a consistent and dependable legal framework is needed to counter rhetoric with rhetoric and action with action.

Since entering government, President-elect Putin has been involved in efforts to control extremist groups. As Director of the FSB, Russian counterpart to the FBI, Mr. Putin was responsible for coordinating and directing enforcement of anti-incitement statutes and other laws designed to protect minority groups. As Prime Minister, Mr. Putin addressed a delegation from the Federation of Jewish Communities of the C.I.S. delivering a strong statement against anti-Semitism. The recent trial and committal of the Choral Synagogue attacker reaffirmed for many the commitment of Russian officials and President-elect Vladimir Putin to protection of minorities, as did his post-election announcement that the since-recovered stabbing victim – Leopold Kaimovsky – would be nominated for decoration as a hero of the state. It is too early to judge the impact from the reported arrests of Russian National Unity members, but their successful prosecution would represent a step forward.

While official condemnation of certain verbal and physical attacks is encouraging, the delay in high-level statements helps fuel and has unintentionally encouraged the increasing frequency and severity of anti-Semitic incidents. The prevention, prosecution and condemnation of anti-Semitic crimes and incitement are only effective if employed in an ongoing and consistent manner, independent of elections and electioneering. Respecting and protecting of minority rights cannot be permanent if only implemented episodically in response to Western pressure; such measures are inherently in Russia's own interest.

Since becoming acting President, in addition to his decorating of Mr. Kaimovsky, Mr. Putin has conveyed to U.S. Congressional leaders his government's commitment to combating anti-Semitism and other forms of ethnic and racial hatred. NCSJ and other Jewish organizations have expressed their willingness to work closely with his government and with the Russian Jewish community to implement public campaigns and training programs to promote this goal.

I would like to provide one example of a community-based initiative to stem the destructive forces of extremism and xenophobia in Russia. Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt, acting in his capacity with the Russian Jewish Congress and in conjunction with NCSJ, has coordinated an unprecedented interfaith leadership coalition within the Russian Federation that can begin to address the intolerance and mutual suspicion underlying Russian society. The coalition represents the religious leadership of the Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Islamic, Catholic and Lutheran communities in the Russian Federation.

Rabbi Goldschmidt's project is grounded in the belief that, although religion has been used to divide, it also carries the potential for facilitating dialogue and cooperation within and between communities. Despite the significant cleavages and outstanding grievances within modern Russian society, leading clergy from five disparate faiths have united to promote a common agenda of humanitarian action, communal healing, and civil society. The coalition is self-sustaining, but there will also be an opportunity for Americans to bolster its profile and impact.



## UKRAINE

Ukraine presents a combination of challenges and opportunities. The history of deep-seated societal anti-Semitism in Ukraine stretches back for centuries, and the legacy of World War II and Stalinist persecutions has taken its toll on Jews as well as non-Jews. The Holocaust saw 600,000 Ukrainian Jews murdered and left a haunting symbol in the ravine at Babi Yar in Kyiv where over 33,000 Jewish victims were executed over mass graves in just two days in September 1941. Despite the painful memories, the modern-day manifestation of anti-Semitism and hate-group activity is lower in Ukraine than in neighboring Russia.

The Ukrainian Jewish community and American Jewish organizations work closely with the Ukrainian government, as well as with the U.S. administration and the Congress, on many items of interest and concern. Several issues remain unresolved, but the lines of communication and understanding are open. The issue of restitution, which has attracted much deserving attention with respect to Holocaust-era claims, is now the subject of dialogue and discussion with respect to hundreds of Jewish communal properties in Ukraine that were seized by the Soviet regime and could be used by the surviving communities. Anti-Semitism in Ukraine today is most visible through the publication of anti-Semitic articles, journals, and leaflets. As in Russia, expressions of popular anti-Semitism do increase in volume during the lead-up to national elections, as named and unnamed political contenders seek to delegitimize their opponents by tying them to Jewish stereotypes.

According to a recent report by the Jewish Confederation of Ukraine, the publication rate of anti-Semitic articles or periodicals rose 20 percent in 1998 to 265, largely the result of an influx of material from Russian sources and the political jockeying prior to Ukraine's parliamentary elections; interestingly, despite the high visibility of anti-Semitic material, the number of Jews in the Ukrainian Parliament actually increased to nearly 20. In 1999, which culminated in Ukraine's Presidential election, the publication rate of anti-Semitic material slightly declined to 222 – still an unacceptably high number that included the Parliament's own newspaper. I am pleased to submit the Confederation's report for inclusion in the record of this hearing. While Ukrainian Jewish leaders feel that politicians and officials need to speak out more forcefully against the often incendiary content and packaging of these messages, the Ukrainian authorities have moved to suspend a handful of publications while others have cut circulation. Disappointingly, public condemnations have not been forthcoming from senior officials in any consistent manner.

It would be a grave error to take for granted the relatively restrained degree of open anti-Semitism in Ukraine. It is simmering beneath the surface in a way that need not incriminate Ukrainian society, but which must be addressed by Ukrainian opinion-shapers and policymakers if that nation ever hopes to achieve integration with the West. Working with Jewish leadership in Ukraine and the United States, and with the U.S. Congress and Administration, the Ukrainian Government is beginning to promote historical dialogue and redress. Much ground remains to be covered in the struggle for a tolerant society.

## **BELARUS**

In Belarus, as in too many European countries, the legacy of anti-Semitism is palpable. The present-day manifestations are less pronounced than in Russia, but the international isolation and authoritarian nature of the regime generate a potentially volatile mix. The less democratic a country, the greater our concern that leaders in the future may resort to the engines of hate to drive their policies or popularity, unrestrained by the rule of law or mature civil society. Mindful of this caveat, the government of Belarus has been responsive to certain concerns, but not with any degree of consistency.

Much of the media anti-Semitism in Belarus emanates from Russian sources, notably Russian National Unity. In 1999, the Government of Belarus halted the publication of a Russian-based newspaper under a statute banning publications that incite ethnic hatred. An April 1999 arson attack on a Minsk synagogue received national media coverage, and authorities arrested two suspects. The government has formed a commission on national minorities, where most religious and ethnic groups are represented.

Last month, a Belarus court ruled in favor of the publisher of an anti-Semitic book in a suit brought by the Jewish community. The book is a collection of anti-Semitic material taken from such anti-Semitic sources as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The community charges that the book, *A War According to the Laws of Viciousness*, “discredits the honor, dignity and reputation of Jews.” The presiding judge ruled that the material does not defame the plaintiffs and is of “scientific character and the topic of discussion by scholars around the world.” In letters to a senior official in Minsk and to the Belarusian Ambassador in Washington, NCSJ wrote that “the distribution of this book incites inter-ethnic hatred and undermines the prospects for civil society in Belarus” and called on the Government “to take a strong and principled stand against those who promote intolerance, bigotry and anti-Semitism.” NCSJ has spoken with the Belarus Ambassador to express our concern and will continue to support the Belarus Jewish community as it appeals the court’s decision.

Although greater freedom and openness often spell greater opportunity for the expression of hate, democratic institutions also afford greater transparency and accountability. And participatory democracies lend themselves more naturally to the growth of civil society that can check and counter xenophobia.

## **THE BALTIC STATES**

Among the Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania are still confronting issues and groups dating back to World War II, including the past rehabilitation of alleged war criminals and the prosecution of others. As the independence and democratic development of the Baltic republics predated the Soviet takeover at the beginning of World War II, these three nations retain much stronger traces of civil society and affinity to the West than the other 12 successor states.

Since Latvia regained its independence, the Jewish community has enjoyed a positive working relationship with the government and other civil institutions. While the Latvian government is

currently in discussion with the United States and other countries about the potential extradition and trial of alleged Nazi war criminal Konrads Kalejs, Latvia has seen increased distribution of the notorious book *The Terrible Year*, which blames Jews for Soviet atrocities preceding the German invasion. Veterans of the Latvian Legion of the Nazi SS marched through Riga last month. In 1998, a Riga synagogue was bombed and later defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti, and in April 1999 the Holocaust memorial near Riga was bombed. We are not aware that any suspects have been arrested or prosecuted.

Lithuania has a record of swift rehabilitations following the post-Soviet regaining of Lithuanian sovereignty. Earlier this year, the Lithuanian Parliament passed a law that allows courts to try alleged war criminals in absentia when they are too ill to attend. This important legislation redresses the increasingly common situation where those who have evaded justice for so long have then avoided prosecution because of their now advanced age. In conjunction with B'nai B'rith International, Lithuania recently distributed 7500 copies of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in Lithuanian translation for use in the school system. Rather than the past as prologue, it can also be a warning if the proper lessons are inculcated into future generations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Post-Soviet societies now stand in the breach between the most appalling features of communism and the promise of a modern civil society. Havel has observed: "The authoritarian regime imposed a certain order.... This order has now been shattered, but a new order that would limit rather than exploit these vices, an order based on freely accepted responsibility to and for the whole of society, has not yet been built —nor could it have been, for such an order takes years to develop and cultivate." This is the critical time, not only for securing the protection of minorities today but for ensuring the potential for future progress and societal stability.

The advocacy movement on behalf of the Jews in the former Soviet Union has made great strides over the past three decades, from attaining freedom of emigration for Jews to the rebirth of Jewish communal life, but anti-Semitism today remains a serious threat in Russia other successor states. The best response to this phenomenon is preemptive, and addressing the manifestations that are already flaring up and spreading.

**Speaking out:** It is imperative for government and civic leaders to denounce the inflammatory and irresponsible words which, in too many cases, inspire violence and undermine public confidence in the rule of law. Although many members of extremist groups believe inherently in xenophobic responses to national difficulties, their leaders appeal to such passions for broader political advantage. When such ploys proceed unchallenged, the most cynical and dangerous messages gain implicit validation and extremism crosses into the mainstream. When, on the other hand, opinion-shapers and public personalities consistently condemn hateful and instigating rhetoric, this removes the cloak of respectability and reduces the value of resorting to a vocabulary of fear. This is the lesson that Morris Abram taught to his home state of Georgia and to the American people, and to the world community. And these concerns will best be addressed when Russian leaders appeal and affirm to the Russian people that extremism and violence are antithetical to democratic progress and economic integration.

**Prosecution:** Concrete action by government and non-governmental leadership must follow public statements of condemnation. The government must enforce laws already enacted to combat fascist propaganda and extremism. In addition, developing hate-crime legislation, monitoring hate-group activities and utilizing law enforcement and judicial mechanisms are key components to combating ethnic hatred. Anyone who propagates ethnic hatred, whether common citizen or government official, should be held accountable and prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and parliamentary immunity lifted from those elected officials who incite ethnic hatred and violence. Bringing Holocaust-era war criminals to justice also reminds the public of the horrific consequences of unbridled hate. Unfortunately, we are unaware of any successful prosecutions against those who engage in virulent anti-Semitic behavior in the former Soviet Union.

**Public Education:** Public education campaigns against intolerance should accompany any legislative or judicial strategy, particularly in remote regions that lack the economic and educational resources of urban areas. Such programs can encourage multi-cultural understanding and be integrated into a long-range strategy toward the eradication of anti-Semitism and ethnic hatred in Russia and elsewhere.

NCSJ advocates long-term and institutional cooperation among the U.S. government, governments of the successor states and NGOs to develop and implement educational initiatives to promote pluralism and tolerance. Integrating tolerance-oriented curricula into the school systems is indispensable, and Holocaust education provides a solid track record. Another important strategy involves using the mass media to counteract negative and hateful messages. Some Western models for combating racism and ethnic hatred may be adapted to Russian communities as well.

**Jewish Community Role:** NCSJ has been working with its member agencies, such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Jewish Women International to develop programs with Jewish community leadership on democratic initiatives. In addition, we are also working with other member agencies, such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC), to highlight particular problems as well as to identify solutions. The Jewish community is prepared to offer guidance and make recommendations to the Russian government for a comprehensive campaign to counteract intolerance, which the Russian government must ultimately fight through legislation, law enforcement, and public education.

**Long-Term Framework:** Addressing extremist activities means more than monitoring and investigating individual incidents – and, hopefully, beginning to show actual results – or speaking out against specific individuals and groups. A system of law that protects the rights of religious minorities and which is predisposed to the prosecution of those threatening these rights is the best and lasting guarantee of a climate that promotes tolerance and the rule of law.

**Institutional Focus:** The list of organizations, individuals, publications and incidents relates only to the current manifestations of an undiminished extremist trend. Such organizations as Pamyat, which once led the list of anti-Semitic hate-mongers, have now been eclipsed by formerly obscure groups as RNE. Names like Vladimir Zhirinovsky, once thought to be relegated to the past by Alexander Barkashov and Albert Makashov, have now returned as

mainstream hate-mongers. Without a consistent institutional focus on the phenomenon and the climate of hatred and violence, as well as on examples and practitioners of the day, there will be no respite in the present and no guarantee of rule of law for the future.

**U.S. Government Role:** The situation also requires continued U.S. Government engagement. U.S. officials must emphasize to their counterparts in the successor states the importance of continuing the transition to a democratic and pluralistic society and of developing an appropriate infrastructure to permanently support economic development, law enforcement, and minority rights.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my testimony, the United States Congress and the Administration have been consistently engaged on the specific concerns regarding anti-Semitism and popular xenophobia as well as on the broader imperative of continued U.S. support for the agents of tolerance and civil society throughout the successor states. Beyond the confines of Capitol Hill, direct contacts with leaders and counterparts in the region are also instrumental in identifying those agents of progress and in impacting upon public and elite attitudes. And it reminds the American people of our mission in the world.

I return to the interfaith religious leadership coalition coordinated through Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt and the Russian Jewish Congress, and two specific ways in which the U.S. Government and Congress can play a role in this unifying factor for civil society. The coalition plans a U.S. visit by a small but senior delegation of religious leadership representing the different faiths. In addition to providing the aegis for such a groundbreaking visit, the United States also offers a broad range of useful models that clergy can apply to Russian society. The coalition also seeks to cooperate in the distribution of U.S. assistance projects, which would allow the inter-religious coalition to build working relationships and to gain credibility among and access to their own constituents.

My friend and mentor, Morris Abram, was fond of quoting from the following rabbinic passage: “The day is short, the task is great, the workers are lazy, the reward is great, and the Master is impatient.... You are not called upon to complete the work, neither are you free to desist from it.” Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity.